TRAVEL INFORMATION

About Leuven

Leuven (Belgium) is a university town located 30km to the east of Brussels. The first references to the town may go back to the 9th century, but it was not until the 12th century that Leuven started to flourish as an important trading center for cloth. This trade had fallen into decline by the 14th century, but a new golden age dawned with the 15th century. The university was founded in 1425 which makes it one of the oldest universities in Europe.

Leuven has a rich heritage and contains various historical buildings from different centuries. Its finely sculpted Town Hall and Saint Peter's church with the famous 'Last Supper' by Thierry Bouts, are examples of Gothic architecture. The 13th century beguinage complex has cobbled streets and fascinating 17th century houses. It is now a University residential quarter for students, professors, employees, and foreign guests of the University and was officially recognised as an UNESCO World Heritage site on 31th March 2000. The St Michael's church, the interior of the St John the Baptist's church, the unrivalled stucco of the Park Abbey are examples of the baroque style. Other styles can be found in The Romanesque Gate, the Saint Lambert's church and the remains of the first town walls. Various other historiocal buildings belong to the patronage of the university, for instance the Van Dale College (Renaissance style) and De Valk College, Pauscollege (Pope's College) and the Arras College (the latter three are in neo-classical style). The Central University Library, located at the Ladeuzeplein, is also worth a visit. It was rebuilt in Flemish Renaissance style after being destroyed by fire in the first world war.

The city of Leuven has a well documented tourist information website.

Next to its cultural heritage, Leuven provides an excellent environment for relaxation in its numerous bars and restaurants. A non exhaustive list of restaurants can be found here. The Old Market is known for its lively nightlife, and a large collection of the famous Belgian beers are served. Beer has played an important role in Leuven's history. At present, the headquarters of the worlds largest brewery group AB Inbev are located in Leuven. First records go back to the 15th century to the 'Den Hoorn' brewery.

How to reach Leuven

Note that Leuven and Louvain are the same city (Louvain is the french name). However, there is another university city called “Louvain-la-Neuve”. When you follow directions or take a train, only follow Leuven/Louvain or otherwise you end up in the wrong place.

By plain

The nearest airport is Brussels International Airport. There is also an airport in Charleroi (also known as Brussels South) which has cheaper flights (e.g. Ryanair), however Leuven is most easily reached from Brussels International Airport.
Brussels airport (Zaventem):

- **By train:**
  Entering the arrival hall, follow the signs towards the train platform. You will find escalators and elevators going to LEVEL -1. Level -1 is the train station of the airport. A ticket costs about €7. There are two trains an hour leaving from the airport to Leuven (not Louvain-La-Neuve). On both trains Leuven is the first stop after 14 to 16 minutes of riding. At the train station in Leuven you can walk, take a bus or a taxi to the hotel, depending where your hotel is.

- **By taxi:**
  A taxi takes about 25 minutes from Brussels Airport to Leuven. A single journey will cost about 70 euro. Always take a taxi at the official taxi stand.


Charleroi airport (“Brussels South airport”, 45km south to Brussels):

- There is no train station at the airport (Brussels South railway station is in Brussels and not at Charleroi).
- There are buses from the airport to the railway station (bus line A). You can purchase a ticket at the bus stop (door n°2) to Charleroi South railway station.
- In Charleroi South Railway Station you can buy a ticket to Leuven (not Louvain-La-Neuve). The travelling time will be between 80 and 95 minutes.

For more info on Charleroi or Brussels South airport, go to: [http://www.charleroi-airport.com/](http://www.charleroi-airport.com/)
For more info on time tables for trains to Leuven (select Charleroi South Railway Station and not Brussels South Railway Station!), go to: [http://www.b-europe.com/Travel](http://www.b-europe.com/Travel)

By train

By train Leuven (not Louvain-La-Neuve) is only 20 minutes from Brussels, 45 minutes from Antwerp, 30 minutes from Liège, 90 minutes from the Belgian coast and at 2 to 3 hours from cities like Düsseldorf, Paris, Amsterdam, Calais,…Travelers from France and the UK can easily take the Thalys, the Eurostar or TGV. The Thalys also comes in from the Netherlands and Germany. There is a direct connection from Frankfurt to Liège and Brussels with the ICE four times a day. Most international trains make a stop in Brussels South railway station (="Bruxelles-Midi","Brussel-Zuid") . From this station (as from every main station in Brussels) it is easy to catch a train to Leuven. A train ticket from Brussels to Leuven costs between 3€ and 6€. There are at least two trains an hour to Leuven. The ride to Leuven from Brussels railway stations will take you about 30 minutes.

The train station of Leuven is conveniently situated at the edge of the city centre. In front of the Leuven railway-station you can take a taxi or take bus no. 2 direction Boskant or Campus until you get to the busstop St.-Michielskerk. You are now in front of the Sint-Michielsstraat where the Summer School takes place.

Information about bus schedules is available on the websites [www.delijn.be](http://www.delijn.be) for bus transport and [http://www.b-europe.com/Travel](http://www.b-europe.com/Travel) for train transport.
By car

From Brussels or Liège

Take the E40 motorway, then the E314 motorway (follow “Leuven Hasselt Genk”). Take exit “17 Winksele”. Note that it is quite difficult to get around in the city center of Leuven by car, due to one way streets and pedestrian areas.

From Hasselt or Aachen

Take the E314/A2 motorway (follow “Brussel, Leuven”). Take exit “17 Leuven” Note that it is quite difficult to get around in the city center of Leuven by car, due to one way streets and pedestrian areas.

Parking in and near the city centre of Leuven

It is very hard to find a free parking spot in the City centre of Leuven (the maximum length of stay is usually limited to a maximum of 2 hours). Most of the streets in the city centre of Leuven have parking meters and the police and “stadswacht” regularly patrol the streets in order to give out fines to illegally parked cars.

Visitors are therefore advised to park their cars in one of the following:

- PAYING parking lots:
  - Parking Ladeuze: 740 parking spots, underground
    Address: Ladeuzeplein 20, it’s entry is indicated from the “Tiense Poort”
    Tel.: +32 (0)16 31 07 07
    Opening hours: 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
  - De Bond: 385 parking spots at the railway station, underground
    Address: Martelarenplein 18 (entry by way of the tunnel)
    Tel: + 32 (0)16 58 43 90
    Opening hours: 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
    This parking is a P+R parking: with your parking ticket you can get a free bus ticket to the city centre. Just show your parking ticket when entering the bus.
  - Sint-Jacobsplein: 338 parking spots, overground
    Address: Sint-Jacobsplein
    Opening hours: 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
    Pay between 09.00 - 21.00

- FREE parking lots outside of the ring:
  - Parking Bodart: 165 parking spots, overground
    Address: Veilingweg

Other parking lots can be found on the [official website](https://www.leuven.nl/en) of the city of Leuven.

City map

The website of the city of Leuven contains a map of Leuven. You can find the directionality of the one way streets when zooming in. This comes in handy when traveling in the center by car. By typing in the street name in “Straatnaam” and pressing the search button “Zoeken”, you can find the street you are looking for.
Visa information

People that need to apply for a visa can find more information on the website of Foreign affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. This website will refer you to the website of the Foreigners Department of the FPS Home Affairs. The latter site is only available in Dutch or French.

Practical information

Currency
Belgium is part of the Euro zone, thus the currency is the euro. It is advisable to have already some cash in euro (€) when you arrive in case the money exchange offices would be closed.

Electricity
Electricity in Belgium is 230V, 50Hz. Plugs French 2-pin (Type E) or (older plugs) European 2-pin (Type C).

Emergency services
For police, fire, or ambulance: DIAL 112.

Language
Belgium has three official languages: Dutch, French and German. The country is divided in "languages zones" indicating the mother tongue of the native population. Leuven lies in the Dutch language zone. Even though French is the official second language, most people have a better understanding of English. In most cases, you can get around speaking only English (you do not need a comprehensive knowledge of the Dutch language). Getting around speaking French is also possible.

Telephone
To make an international call from Belgium, dial 00 followed by the country code.

Belgium's country code is 0032.

Time
The local time in Belgium is Central European Time (GMT + 1 hour)

Tipping
Tips are always included in the prices given in taxies and restaurants, but you are always welcome to tip if you feel the service was especially good.